

**The**  
**THOREAU**  
**SOCIETY**  
**BULLETIN**

BULLETIN FIFTY-NINE

SPRING, 1957

ANNUAL MEETING . . . .

The annual meeting of the Thoreau Society will be held in Concord on Saturday July 13th. Details of the meeting will be found in the mimeographed notice mailed with this bulletin.

Unless further nominations are filed, the slate of officers announced in the previous bulletin will be elected at the annual meeting.

PHINEAS ALLEN, THOREAU'S PRECEPTOR  
by Gladys Hosmer . . . .

Thoreau wrote for his class report in 1847: "I was fitted, or rather made unfit for college at Concord Academy and elsewhere, mainly by myself, with the countenance of Phineas Allen, Preceptor!"

Phineas Allen was born in Medfield, Mass., on Oct. 15, 1801, and died at West Newton, Mass., on May 25, 1885. He received his A.B. degree from Harvard College in 1825, and his A.M. in 1828.

In the Harvard University Archives are two folders containing matter concerning Allen.

A letter from C. K. Dillaway, evidently the 1825 Class Secretary, dated May 28, 1885, and addressed to the Alumni Secretary, encloses Allen's obituary notices from the BOSTON TRANSCRIPT and BOSTON ADVERTISER, which, says Dillaway, "are so satisfactory that nothing more need be said."

From the TRANSCRIPT: "Phineas Allen of West Newton died on Monday night at the age of 83 years. He was born in Medfield, and was a descendant of the original settlers of the Town. In 1818 he commenced teaching in Sherborn. He was then only 17 years old. The following winter he taught in the east district of Northborough. In 1821 he entered college at Cambridge, and the day previous had walked from Northborough to Boston, a distance of 30 miles, and after being admitted to the University walked back. Students at that period were allowed to be absent from their class in winter for teaching purposes, and Mr. Allen taught in Chelmsford (now Lowell) the first winter. During the winters of his last four years of college life he taught the children of the late Dr. Ware." (Note: Dr. John Ware of the Harvard Medical School?)

"On the Monday succeeding graduation day in 1825 he commenced teaching in Brookline, where he received the degree of A.B. In 1827 he went to Concord where he taught 8 years. There he fitted for college the late Judge Albert Nelson, the late William Whiting, legal adviser to President Lincoln; in 1831 Judge E. Rockwood Hoar, and in 1833 H. D. Thoreau. Senator Hoar of Worcester

commenced at 6 years the study of Latin under Mr. Allen. In 1836 he left Concord and assumed charge of Northfield Academy, and he also taught in Medway, Dedham, Belton, East Braintree, Scituate, Provincetown, Westminster, West Newbury and Tynsborough. In 1860 he went to West Newton where he has since resided, and has been employed as a teacher in the West Newton English and classical schools. He taught for the last time Thursday of last week. He was the oldest teacher in the State and possibly in the country in active service. He was known among all his old pupils as a veritable encyclopedia of general information, being a thorough Latin, Greek, Spanish, French and Portuguese scholar. Between 1818 and 1876 he lost but 5 school-days on account of sickness. In 1876 he was upset in a carriage in Medfield, at the centennial celebration there and was consequently disabled for a few months. Five of the pupils taught in Concord became judges, one was a D.D. and one was a general (Gen. Whipple). While at West Newton, he has been teaching languages, and had special charge of the Spanish students."

From the BOSTON DAILY ADVERTISER: "Mr. Phineas Allen, the oldest teacher in the county, state, and probably in the country, died in West Newton on Monday at the age of 83 years. Since 1860 he has taught the languages in the West Newton English and Classical School..... He graduated from Harvard in 1825, and his classmates were C. F. Adams, Judge Seth Ames, Admiral Charles Henry Davis, C. K. Dillaway, Horatio Greenough, the Rev. Dr. Hedge and Thomas Sherwin..... He was a perfect scholar and an encyclopedia of information..... In 1836 Mr. Allen was principal of Northfield Academy."

Two letters from Allen to Dillaway are dated respectively June 27, 1860, and July 13, 1865. In the first, in accepting an invitation to a class reunion, Allen writes:

"During the last 10 years I have been engaged in teaching most of the time. My income has, however, been small, and in consequence of the sickness of my wife and one of my sons, I still remain poor. To show that I have labored faithfully and that the present which I received from my classmates after our last meeting was not bestowed unworthily, I will copy for a classmate the following from the Newburyport HERALD (July, 1856) relating to my school in West Newbury."

Then follows an exuberant account of the examination and exhibition at the West Newbury High School, as well as an account in the same paper, dated 1858, when he left his position. He goes on to say: "For the last two years I have been

(Continued on Page Three)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS . . . .

If this paragraph is marked with red pencil, it indicates that your membership in the society expires with this issue. Renewals: \$1.00 a year. We would be happy to receive multi-year renewals if it is more convenient for you. Life memberships are \$25.00.

ANOTHER FORGOTTEN REVIEW  
OF THOREAU'S WEEK . . .

In past issues of our bulletin, we have reprinted a number of reviews of the first edition of Thoreau's first book, including several that had been missed by the bibliographers. We have now uncovered still another --this from the pages of the English periodical the West-Minster Review, LII (Jan., 1850), 309-310.

A Week was not published separately in England, but the American publisher, James Munroe, distributed copies through the London publisher John Chapman, and Chapman pasted little stickers with his imprint on the title page

Of all the reviews of A Week, this is one of the most favorable. Once again we must concede that the British critics were quicker in recognizing Thoreau's genius than were his own countrymen.

As we have announced from time to time, it is our intention to eventually include in our bulletin reprints of every notice of Thoreau that appeared in print in his lifetime. We are certain that there are many that have not yet come to light. And we will be grateful to any who call such forgotten notices to our attention.

An exceedingly pleasant narrative of a week's boating excursion upon the waters of two rivers, whose very existence, perhaps, is all unknown to the majority of the dwellers on this side of the Atlantic. The author is evidently one who has read much, and thought much,—a keen observer and lover of nature, and one whom we could gladly journey with, amid the scenery described in this volume. Notwithstanding occasional attempts at fine writing, and some rather long-winded disquisitions upon religion, literature, and other matters,—sometimes naturally arising from the incidents of the voyage, sometimes lugged in apparently without rhyme or reason,—the book is an agreeable book, and all the irrelevant matter may be skipped by those who don't like it, while such as prefer this kind of reading to the narrative portions, may revel in it to their heart's content; and so may each class of readers find something to suit them in these pages.

We know not if the following choice mottoes be original or select; it figures as one of the three mottoes at the beginning of the book, each having a page devoted to itself, a significant hint, perhaps, of the absence of "taxes on knowledge" across the Atlantic:—

"I sailed up a river with a pleasant wind,  
New lands, new people, and new thoughts to  
find;  
Many fair reaches and headlands appeared,  
And many dangers were there to be feared;  
But when I remember where I have been,  
And the fair landscapes that I have seen,  
Thou seemest the only permanent shore,  
The cape never rounded, nor wandered o'er."

As a set-off we give a sample of the prose, in the following description of a bivouac on the banks of a river, which makes one long to be of such a party.

The *voyageurs* are two brothers, who, in a boat of their own building, weighed anchor in the river port of Concord, U. S., "on Saturday, the last day of August, 1839." A tranquil voyage, with but few incidents, bring them, on Monday evening, to their halting-place, which is thus described:—

"Soon the village of Nashua was out of sight, and the woods were gained again, and we rowed slowly on before sun-set, looking for a solitary place in which to spend the night. A few evening clouds began to be reflected in the water, and the surface was dimpled only here and there, by a musk-rat crossing the stream. We camped, at length, near Penichook-brook, on the confines of Nashville, by a deep ravine, under the skirts of a pine-wood, where the dead pine-leaves were our carpet, and their tawny boughs stretched over head. But fire and smoke soon tamed the scene; the rocks consented to be our walls, and the pines our roof. A wood-side was already the fittest locality for us.

"The wilderness is near, as well as dear, to every man. Even the oldest villages are indebted to the border of wild wood which surrounds them, more than to the gardens of men. There is something indescribably inspiring and beautiful in the aspect of the forest skirting and occasionally jutting into the midst of new towns, which, like the sand-heaps of fresh fox-burrows, have sprung up in their midst. The very uprightness of the

pines and maples, asserts the ancient rectitude and vigour of nature. Our lives need the relief of such a back-ground, where the pine flourishes, and the jay still screams.

"We had found a safe harbour for our boat, and as the sun was setting carried up our furniture, and soon arranged our house upon the bank; and while the kettle steamed at the tent-door, we chatted of distant friends, and of the sights we were to behold, and wondered which way the towns lay from us. Our cocoa was soon boiled, and supper set upon our chest, and we lengthened out this meal, like old *voyageurs*, with our talk. Meanwhile we spread the map upon the ground, and read in the gazetteer when the first settlers came here and got a township granted. Then, when supper was done, and we had written the journal of our voyage, we wrapped our buffaloes about us, and lay down with our heads pillow'd on our arms, listening awhile to the distant baying of a dog, or the murmurs of the river, or to the winds, which had not gone to rest: \* \* \* \* \* or, half awake and half asleep, dreaming of a star which glimmered through our cotton roof. Perhaps, at midnight, one was awakened by a cricket shrilly singing on his shoulder, or by a hunting spider in his eye, and was lulled asleep again by some streamlet purling its way along at the bottom of a wooded and rocky ravine in our neighbourhood. It was pleasant to lie with our heads so low in the grass, and hear what a tinkling ever-busy laboratory it was. A thousand little artisans beat on their anvils all night long."—p. 177.

We shall be glad to meet our author again, as soon as his 'Day in the Woods,' which we see announced as nearly ready, shall have reached England; for we may as well intimate, before we conclude, that the present volume is a native of Boston, U. S., having been introduced to this country by a spirited publisher, to whom the English reader is already under considerable obligation.

in Tyngsborough, and appends a very complimentary statement from the Tyngsborough school committee report and the recommendation given him by the school committee in Bolton. He adds that the previous winter he received a gift from his pupils as a "token of esteem."

"I have enjoyed life", he writes, "because I have every reason to believe that I have secured the love of those who have been my pupils. My great trouble has been that I have not been able to give my children such an education as they would have been glad to receive, and I have not been able to provide a home for them, or for myself in my approaching old age. Yet I have enjoyed good health. I do not know that I ever was absent from school a day for sickness; while others who have been blessed with richness and honors, have their trials which they may have thought as great as my poverty."

The 1865 letter is another acceptance for a class reunion and a reply to a request for news of himself: "As you have kindly assisted me in my troubles, you will be interested to learn that my family are now somewhat relieved from former embarrassment. I have 4 children still spared to me, who are all that a parent could desire. My oldest son has been a teacher 12 years and is now in an insurance office in Boston. My second son was educated as a druggist in Syracuse, N. Y.; he then gives a detailed account of his son's war experiences as Hospital Steward in the 22nd. N. Y. Cavalry. He continues: "My youngest son died in Feb., 1864 of Typhoid fever. He was 22 years of age. He had been a long voyage as first mate in the "Martha Cobb." He lived three weeks after he came home. His image is constantly before me, and will be while I live. I shall never feel as happy as before. I depended more on him than anyone living. He followed the sea, not for love of it but for his and our support. My youngest daughter is eighteen. She has been an assistant in the English and Classical School in this place. I have been employed in the same school - take some of the boys into my family - have now three Spaniards to board and instruct during vacation. My wife was a Fisk - cousin of our classmate, Augustus H. Fisk."

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Allen failed to refer to the circumstances under which he left Concord.

In the 1830s and '40s, Concord became involved in the Anti-Masonic politically involved disputes. Allen joined the Anti-Masonic group. At the March Town Meeting in 1834, the "Yeastman's Gazette" for March 8 reported "the following gentlemen (comprising the whole Anti-Masonic ticket) were elected by a handsome majority", including Allen who was elected Town Clerk, with 126 votes, over Abiel Heywood, who received 119 votes. This was a sorry day for PH, for the more responsible element in Concord, including the backers of the Academy, supported Freemasonry. In "Memoirs of the Social Circle" (third series, page 220) Judge John S. Keyes wrote in

his biography of Judge George Merrick Brooks: "At the age of six or seven years he went to the Concord Academy, then kept by Mr. Phineas Allen, and remained in it until the school was broken up by the election of Mr. Allen as Town Clerk by the Anti-Masons, in March, 1834, which caused the withdrawal of most of the scholars by their indignant parents."

Canby writes (page 68) that the Academy remained closed after Allen left until it was opened by Thoreau and his brother John in September, 1838.

In Thoreau's "Journal", under the date of Oct. 21, 1855, HDT describes Allen revisiting Concord while attending a Sabbath-school convention. (For some reason, Bradford Torrey, in his index describes this visit to one William Allen.) "He called on no living creature among his pupils, but insisted on going to the new burying ground and reading all the epitaphs...He did, however, ask after one or two juvenile scamps and one idiot boy who came to school to him-how they had turned out, and also after a certain caged fool, dead since he was here, who lived near where he boarded; also after a certain ancient tavern, now pulled down."

Perhaps he felt uncertain of his welcome by those pupils of whom he later boasted in his Class reports.

Judge E. Rockwood Hoar, in the book of the Harvard Class of 1835, wrote: "I commenced the study of ancient languages at our village Academy, which school I continued to attend from that time forth until entering College. There was a succession of instructors, most of them as bad as could reasonably be desired."

Judge John S. Keyes, in the "Social Circle Memoirs" (fifth series, page 73) wrote thus: "When six years old I began to attend the Academy then kept by Phineas Allen, the poorest teacher and worst school I ever knew anything about personally."

Did Allen recall pleasant hours at the Thoreaus' table at the same period when the Wards were also paying guests?

At any rate, it was Thoreau the unpretentious whom he contacted when he came back to Concord.

#### BACK PUBLICATIONS OF THE THOREAU SOCIETY.

We receive frequent inquiries as to how to obtain back publications of the society. The following are available from the secretary:

Bulletins 1-9 reprinted together...50¢  
Bulletins 10, 11, 14-58, each.....25¢  
Booklets 3-11, each.....25¢  
Bulletins 12 and 13 and Booklets 1 and 2 are out-of-print, but the secretary will gladly lend copies for those who wish to make photostatic copies to complete their files. Several other early bulletins will probably go out of print in the near future.

ADDITIONS TO THE THOREAU BIBLIOGRAPHY..WH

Booth, Philip. LETTER FROM A DISTANT LAND. New York: Viking, 1957. \$3.00. Philip Booth is one of the most gifted and promising of our younger poets. The title poem of this, his first volume of poems is a blank verse letter to Thoreau, telling of the changes that have come about in Concord and environs in the past century. (Booth is now a resident of nearby Lincoln.) It is thought-provoking, penetrating, and beautifully expressed. Quite deservedly it has won the Lamont Poetry Prize.

[Cameren, Kenneth Walter]. "A Brief Glance at the Thoreau Society." EMERSON SOCIETY QUARTERLY, VII (1957), 54. A history of our society. Prof. Cameron has donated extra copies of this to us and they are free for the asking, so long as the supply lasts. Simply write your secretary for a copy.

----- "Emerson, Thoreau, and the Town and Country Club." ESQ, VIII (1957), 2-17. The minutes, constitution, and other records of the club which Alcott organized in 1849 and to which Thoreau briefly belonged.

----- "Emerson, Thoreau, Elegant Extracts, and Proverb Lore." ESQ, VI (1957), 28-39. Reproductions with comments of pages from a favorite anthology used by Emerson and Thoreau.

----- "Emerson, Thoreau, Parson Frost, and 'The Problem!'" ESQ, VI (1957), 16. A MS note by HDT sheds light on the composition of Emerson's poem.

----- "Thoreau's Gift to the M.H.S. in 1846." ESQ, VI (1957), 48. Records a gift of an early deed by Thoreau to the Mass. Hist. Soc.

----- "Thoreaus in the Evangelical Missionary Society of Concord." ESQ, VII (1957), 52-53. Records membership of various feminine members of the Thoreau household in a religious society.

----- "Thoreau's Newspaper Clippings in the Morgan College Notebook." ESQ, VII (1957), 51-52. Facsimiles of several newspaper clippings Thoreau pasted in an early notebook.

----- "Thoreau's Early Compositions in the Ancient Languages." ESQ, VIII (1957) 20-29. Facsimiles of two early Greek papers by Thoreau, with comments.

----- "An Unidentified French Passage in Thoreau's Notebook." ESQ, VIII (1957) 36. Asks the source for an unknown quotation in Thoreau's notebook.

----- "Young Henry Thoreau in the Annals of the Concord Academy (1829-1833)." ESQ IX (1957), 1-42. Fully documented early records of the Concord Academy which HDT attended, including much on Phineas Allen, his teacher.

Dickerson, May Cynthia. WINTER PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE WOODS AND FIELDS OF MASSACHUSETTS WITH QUOTATIONS SELECTED FROM THOREAU'S JOURNAL ON WINTER IN MASSACHUSETTS. New York: DeVinne Press, n.d. A small pamphlet of photographs and quotations.

FRIENDS. "Walden Pond." May, 1957. pp. 12-15. A series of beautiful color photographs from the Chevrolet house organ.

Graustein, Jeannette E. "Thoreau's Packer on Mt. Washington." APPALACHIA, June, 1957, pp. 414-417. Identifies the packer who helped Thoreau on his 1858 trip as William H. H. Wentworth.

Harvard University. "Order of Exercises for Commencement, XX August, MDCCCLXXXVII" in ESQ, VII (1957), 28. Facsimile of program for Thoreau's graduation exercises.

----- "Order of Performances for Exhibition, Monday, July 13, 1835" in ESQ, VIII (1957), 28-29. Facsimile of program for Thoreau's Greek dialogue on Decius and Cato with M. Clarke. Hough, Henry Beetle. THOREAU OF WALDEN. Review. ESQ, VI (1957), 46.

Jones, Joseph. "Villages as Universities: Aesthetic Papers and a Passage in Walden." ESQ, VII (1957), 40-42. Points out a possible source in an Elizabeth Peabody essay for an idea in WALDEN.

Moiles, Bill. "Thoreau Would Frown on 'No Parking' Signs." WORCESTER TELEGRAM. May 1, 1957. Account of a visit to Walden Pond.

MONITOR. "Walden." in ESQ, VII (1957), 43. Facsimile reprint of tribute to Thoreau from the May 17, 1862 Concord newspaper.

Thoreau, Henry David. "Aphorisms." ESQ, VII (1957), 37-39. Reprinted from the Bibliophile Society FIFTH YEAR BOOK.

----- "The Seasons." ESQ, IX (1957), 4. Reprint of Thoreau's first essay.

----- WALDEN. Edited, annotated, and with an Introduction by Sherman Paul. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957. 238pp. Riverside Editions A14. \$6.50. A new paperbound edition for college use. The introduction is by far the best yet to appear in an edition of WALDEN. It is particularly good on the organic structure of the book. It may, however, be a little too complex for the average undergraduate. The annotations, though few, are decidedly pertinent. Appended is Charles Lane's DIAL essay on "Life in the Woods," which, while interesting, adds little to the value of the book.

----- The Same. Review of second edition. ESQ, VII (1957), 43. Reprinted from the MONITOR of June 7, 1862.

Weiss, John. "Poem Read at the Annual Dinner of the Class of Eighteen Hundred and Thirty Seven. February 26, 1874." in ESQ, VII (1957), 35-37. Facsimile of commemorative poem for Thoreau's Harvard class.

----- "Thoreau." in ESQ, VII (1957), 6-17. Facsimile reprint of review of Thoreau's books from CHRISTIAN EXAMINER for July, 1865.

Woodress, James. DISSERTATIONS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE 1891-1955. Duke Univ. Press, 1957. \$2.00. P.42 lists 33 doctoral dissertations on Thoreau.

I am indebted to the following for information used in this bulletin: H. Adel, T. Bailey, J. Broderick, M. Campbell, R. Cherry, C. Hoagland, G. Hosmer, L. Miller, W. Moiles, C. Morris, L. Pederson, M. Swaller, S. Thomas, M. Underhill, and R. Wheeler. Please keep the secretary informed of all new items of Thoreau interest.

The Thoreau Society Inc. is an informal organization of students and followers of Henry David Thoreau. Its bulletins are issued quarterly; its booklets, occasionally. Annual meetings are held in Concord each July. Officers of the society are Howard Zahniser, Hyattsville, Md.; president; Mrs. Herbert Hosmer, Concord, Mass., vice-president; and Walter Harding, secretary-treasurer. Annual membership in the society is one dollar; life membership, \$25. Communications concerning membership or publications should be addressed to the secretary.

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